

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

1. (Currently Amended) A [[data]] patent information searching apparatus for searching a database based on a search criterion entered in a corresponding data entry field by a user, the [[data]] patent information searching apparatus comprising:

a database that stores a plurality of pieces of patent information data as search  
5 targets;

a field information holding unit operable to hold, for each of search purposes  
corresponding to procedures relating to patent, field information indicating one or more of a  
plurality of data entry fields that correspond one to one with a plurality of search categories  
structuring the database; and

10 a field display unit operable to display the one or more data entry fields indicated  
by the held field information, and to hide any of the plurality of data entry fields not indicated by  
the held field information, as display flags that correspond one-to-one to data entry fields to be  
used by the user for entering the search criterion, and that each indicates whether or not to  
display a corresponding one of the data entry fields, and further hold character string data for  
15 displaying names of categories of the data entry fields, and character string data for displaying  
names of the data entry fields, each data entry field being categorized in any of the categories  
including a classification category, a number category, a date category, a unique-name category  
and a text category;

20 a category display unit operable to display a list of the categories using the  
character string data for displaying the names of the categories;

a category receiving unit operable to receive, from the user, a selection of one or more categories from the list of the categories;

a field list display unit operable to display a list of data-entry fields in each of the selected categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the data-entry fields, and not to display a list of data-entry fields in the other categories that are not selected;

a field receiving unit operable to receive, from the user, a selection of one or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in the list;

an update unit operable to update the field information by setting display flags corresponding to the selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to data-entry fields not selected by the user;

a field display unit operable, in accordance with the field information, to display the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been set, and not display the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been cleared;

a data searching unit operable to receive the search criterion entered in the data-entry fields displayed by the field display unit, and search for data matching the received search criterion; and

a search result display unit operable to display a result of the search conducted by the data searching unit.

2.-4. (Cancelled)

5. (Currently Amended) ~~A data~~ The patent information searching apparatus according to ~~Claim 4 of Claim 1~~, wherein

the category display unit displays the list of the categories on a screen where the data-entry fields are displayed by the field display unit,

5 the field list display unit displays the list of the data-entry fields on the screen where the data-entry fields are displayed by the field display unit, and

the field display unit updates the displayed data-entry fields immediately when the selection has been accepted field receiving unit receives the selection of the data-entry fields.

6.-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently Amended) A ~~[[data]]~~ patent information searching method for searching, using a patent information searching apparatus, a database for a desired piece of patent information data based on a search criterion entered in a corresponding data-entry field by a user, ~~the data searching method comprising:~~

5 the patent information searching apparatus comprising:  
a database that stores a plurality of pieces of patent information data as search targets; and

~~a field information holding step of holding field information indicating one or more of a plurality of data entry fields that correspond one-to-one with a plurality of search~~  
10 ~~categories structuring the database; and~~

~~a field display step of displaying the one or more data entry fields indicated by the held field information, and hiding any of the plurality of data entry fields not indicated by the held field information.~~

a field information holding unit operable to hold, for each of search purposes  
15 corresponding to procedures relating to a patent, field information as display flags that

correspond one-to-one to data-entry fields to be used by the user for entering the search criterion, and that each indicates whether or not to display a corresponding one of the data-entry fields, and further hold character string data for displaying names of categories of the data-entry fields , and character string data for displaying names of the data-entry fields, each data-entry field being  
20 categorized in any of the categories including a classification category, a number category, a date category, a unique-name category and a text category, and

the patent information searching method comprising:

a category display step of displaying a list of the categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the categories;

25 a category receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more categories from the list of the categories;

a field list display step of displaying a list of data-entry fields in each of the selected categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the data-entry fields, and not to displaying a list of data-entry fields in the other categories that are not selected;

30 a field receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in the list;

an update step of updating the field information by setting display flags corresponding to the selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to data-  
35 entry fields not selected by the user;

a field display step of, in accordance with the field information, displaying the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been set, and not displaying the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been cleared;

a data searching step of receiving the search criterion entered in the data-entry  
40 fields displayed in the field display step, and searching for data matching the received search  
criterion; and

a search result display step of displaying a result of the search conducted in the  
data searching step.

14. (Currently Amended) A [[data]] patent information searching program for  
searching, using a patent information searching apparatus, a database for a desired piece of  
patent information data based on a search criterion entered in a corresponding data-entry field by  
a user, the data searching program comprising: the patent information searching apparatus  
5 comprising:

a field information holding step of holding field information indicating one or  
more of a plurality of data-entry fields that correspond one-to-one with a plurality of search  
categories structuring the database; and

a field display step of displaying the one or more data-entry fields indicated by the  
10 held field information, and hiding any of the plurality of data-entry fields not indicated by the  
held field information.

a database that stores a plurality of pieces of patent information data as search  
targets; and

a field information holding unit operable to hold, for each of search purposes  
15 corresponding to procedures relating to a patent, field information as display flags that  
correspond one-to-one to data-entry fields to be used by the user for entering the search criterion,  
and that each indicates whether or not to display a corresponding one of the data-entry fields, and

20 further hold character string data for displaying names of categories of the data-entry fields, and character string data for displaying names of the data-entry fields, each data-entry field being categorized in any of the categories including a classification category, a number category, a date category, a unique-name category and a text category, and

the patent information searching program causes the patent information searching apparatus to execute:

25 a category display step of displaying a list of the categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the categories;

a category receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more categories from the list of the categories;

30 a field list display step of displaying a list of data-entry fields in each of the selected categories using the character string data for displaying the names of the data-entry fields, and not to displaying a list of data-entry fields in the other categories that are not selected;

a field receiving step of receiving, from the user, a selection of one or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in the list;

35 an update step of updating the field information by setting display flags corresponding to the selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to data-entry fields not selected by the user;

a field display step of, in accordance with the field information, displaying the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been set, and not displaying the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been cleared;

40                    a data searching step of receiving the search criterion entered in the data-entry fields displayed in the field display step, and searching for data matching the received search criterion; and

a search result display step of displaying a result of the search conducted in the data searching step.

15.     (New) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1, wherein  
         the data-entry fields categorized in the classification category are Classification  
by four industrial property laws, IPC, FI, and F Term,

         the data-entry fields categorized in the number category are Application Number,  
5   Publication Number, International Application Number, International Publication Number,  
Unexamined Patent Publication Number, Examined Patent Publication Number, Registration  
Number, Priority Number, Related Application Number, and Number of Appeal,

         the data-entry fields categorized in the date category are Date of Filing, Date of  
Publication of Application, Date of Filing of International Application, Date of Publication of  
10   International Application, Date of Publication of Unexamined Patent Application, Date of  
Domestic Re-Publication of PCT International Application, Date of Publication of Official  
Gazette, Date of Publication of Examined Patent Application, Date of Registration, Date of  
Publication for Registered Patent, and Date of Filing of Application Claiming Priority,

         the data-entry fields categorized in the unique-name category are  
15   Applicant/Right-Holder, Inventor, Representative, Examiner, and Designated Country, and

         the data-entry fields categorized in the text category are Title of the Invention,  
Detailed Description of the Invention, Claim(s), Field of the Invention, Description of the Prior

Art, Problem(s) to be Solved by the Invention, Means for Solving the Problem(s), Embodiment of the Invention, Effect of the Invention, Brief Description of the Drawings, Description of

20 Characters, Abstract, Abstract + Claim(s), and Full Text.

16. (New) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1, wherein

the field receiving unit receives from the user, a selection two or more data-entry fields that are to be used for conducting the search from the data-entry fields displayed in the list,

the update unit updates the field information by setting display flags  
5 corresponding to the two or more selected data-entry fields and clearing display flags corresponding to data-entry fields not selected by the user, and

the field display unit, in accordance with the field information, simultaneously displays the two or more data-entry fields for which the display flags have been set, and not display the data-entry fields for which the display flags have been cleared.

17. (New) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 1 further comprising:

a user ID input unit to accept a user ID wherein the display flags are associated with the user ID such that the display flags are preserved when the user ID is accepted at a subsequent period of time.

18. (New) The patent information searching apparatus of Claim 17, wherein the display flags have a value of 1 if the display flags have been set, and the display flags have a value of 0 if the display flags have been cleared.